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UNCLAS BUCHAREST 000837

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SUBJECT: FORMER VICE-PREMIER ADRIEAN VIDEANU ELECTED MAYOR OF BUCHAREST

Ref: Bucharest 814

1. (SBU) Summary. Liberal-Democratic (PNL-PD) Alliance candidate Adriean Videanu won the Bucharest mayoral election on April 3. Given that he received more than half the vote, there will not be an electoral run-off. Videanu is a successful pro-American businessman with the ear of President Basescu. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Romania's Central Electoral Bureau April 4 announced that Liberal-Democratic (PNL-PD) Alliance candidate Adriean Videanu won Bucharest mayoral elections held April 3. According to official results, Videanu won 53 percent of the votes, defeating his main challenger, Marian Vanghelie, from the Social Democratic Party (PSD). Vanghelie garnered only 29.5 percent of the votes.

3. (SBU) The elections were characterized by only 24.8 percent voter turnout, the lowest ever for the Bucharest mayoralty. Analysts said the general belief that Videanu would win and voter fatigue after national elections in December contributed to widespread apathy. Videanu will fill immediately the mayoral position, which was vacated by Traian Basescu in December when the latter won the Romanian presidency.

4. (SBU) Videanu is a longstanding Member of Parliament for the Democratic Party (PD) and a confidante of President Basescu. He moved into the national spotlight last summer, when he was rumored as a possible prime ministerial pick in the event of victory by then PNL-PD presidential candidate Theodor Stolojan. Basescu ultimately selected National Liberal Party (PNL) chief Calin Popescu-Tariceanu for the PM position, but Videanu was named to one of the top Vice Premier slots and given charge of economic issues and negotiations with the IMF. Basescu reportedly then picked Videanu as the Alliance candidate for Bucharest mayor. Videanu resigned his ministerial responsibilities just before the campaign. Videanu has no experience in local politics, but he has won a reputation as a successful businessman. The media often refer to him as "the marble king" -- he owns one of the largest marble companies in the country.

5. (SBU) In his initial remarks after the announcement of his mayoral win, Videanu showed little surprise, as he and his supporters widely expected to win. He declared improving Bucharest infrastructure one of his top priorities as a mayor. He also pledged to build major sports and financial complexes and expand a "green zone" to reduce dust and pollution in the city.

6. (SBU) Comment. Post knows Videanu well and has worked closely with him in the Parliament and in Government. He is enthusiastically pro-American and pro-free market. His two children attend the American International School in Bucharest, and he credits the small business loans he received through USAID programs several years ago for his current status as one of Romania's post-communist success stories. While lacking the dynamic and highly personal style of Basescu, he nonetheless will bring a high level of competence and commitment to City Hall. His direct access to Basescu and PM Tariceanu will also help him greatly in bringing resources to and gaining attention for the city. With a PNL-PD majority in the City Council - as well as Alliance control of in five of the six Bucharest sector mayoralties - he should be in a strong political position to carry out his mandate to increase economic activity and improve the quality of life in the capital.

7. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNET Website: www.state.gov/p/eur/bucharest. DELARE